

# Winds of Peace

Newsletter for Madison Quakers Projects in Viet Nam

October 2002



Issue #10

## Going Back

by Mike Boehm

The forces that motivated me to begin doing humanitarian work in Viet Nam were powerful, irresistible. But, like many who began working in Viet Nam, I was also idealistic and naive. I thought all that was needed was to find people of goodwill, and that by working together in the spirit of peace, friendship and hope for the future of our two countries all would go well.

Of course, it didn't work out that way, and anyone who has done development work in Viet Nam is probably smiling right now. The conditions that affected our work—the history between our two countries, cultural differences, and, most importantly, the bureaucracy of the Vietnamese government—were complex, resulting in some wild curves thrown our way. The following story is one such curve.

Ceremonies were scheduled for the symbolic groundbreaking ceremony for the My Lai Peace Park on March 16, 1998. From past experiences, I knew I needed to be in Viet Nam early to try to resolve problems that might come up. In an attempt to prevent problems before they came up, Do and I had prepared a fax to send to the Vice-Chair of Son Tinh District, our partner for the My Lai Peace Park Project. This fax very clearly spelled out the plans that Do and I had drawn up for the simple ceremonies at the My Lai Peace Park. We asked for a banner to be placed at the site of the park, to plant a few trees, read poetry, and release doves. I sent this fax to the Vice-Chair many times: in January 1998, early February 1998, and twice in late February after I had arrived in Ha Noi.

Once Do and I arrived in Quang Ngai city, the meetings with the Vietnamese and international press, meetings with officials, and others became such a blur of activity that all our attention was focused on these events to the exclusion of everything else. So it was a shock to find out late in the afternoon of March 15, less than eighteen hours before the ceremonies were to begin, that nothing had been prepared for the My Lai Peace Park ceremonies. My heart sank. I could only think of the worse case scenario when the media showed up at the park site and there was nothing but sand. What could we say? What would the media say when they got back home?

By this time I was feeling angry and depressed, but mostly I was feeling impotent. In addition to this, I had to prepare myself for a formal supper with the Vice-Chair of Quang Ngai Province. The previous day Mike Wallace and the crew from 60 Minutes, Hugh Thompson, Larry Colburn, and I had been given written invitations to join Mr. Tran, Vice-Chair of Quang Ngai Province for supper. I have been to many of these suppers before and although they seem to be on the surface only eating, drinking and laughing, these meals are a very important form of diplomacy. So, somehow I needed to put all the negative emotions aside in order to be “up” for this dinner.



Photo by Tran Van Thuy.

Groundbreaking ceremony for the My Lai Peace Park, March 16, 1998.

For the first half of the evening we ate, visited, and toasted each other with many beers. Then Tran stood up and sang a love song. Now here was a 53 year old man, member of the Communist Party and a veteran who fought many years in the war, singing in an incredibly beautiful voice about his love being like the stream that flows beneath the trees. I was sitting next to Hugh, who turned to me and said with tears in his eyes, “I can't believe this.” Tran finished his song and then asked if we would sing a song.

Well, we kind of shuffled our feet around, you know, American men not knowing how to sing, etc. Then Hugh stood up, grabbed me by one hand and Larry by the other, and lifted us up. Soon everyone was standing, hands linked together. Then Hugh began singing “Amazing Grace” in his gravelly voice. We stood there singing together, swaying slightly back and forth with tears in our eyes. When we finished and sat down, it was obvious the mood of the evening had changed.

Larry stood up then and was going to make a short speech about the My Lai Peace Park. I leaned behind Hugh and told Larry to be sure to say that he was really enthusiastic about attending the ceremonies at the peace park the next day and planting trees there. He did that and even expanded on that theme. Hugh stood up next, and I leaned over to him and said, “Be sure to say you are really enthusiastic ...etc.”

Supper finally ended at about 8:30PM and the 60 Minutes crew, along with Hugh and Larry, filed out to go back to the hotel. I held back, and when there were only Tran and his interpreters left in the room, I went up to him and said, “Mr. Tran, the two American heroes (and they were heroes to the Vietnamese), Mr. Hugh Thompson and Mr. Larry Colburn, are very enthusiastic about attending the

ceremonies at the My Lai Peace Park tomorrow and planting trees there. Nothing has been done. Now they will be very disappointed if they arrive tomorrow at the peace park and nothing has been prepared." I said goodbye then and joined the rest of the crew on the bus.

Early the next day, as we stood in front of our hotel waiting to go to the My Lai Memorial for the first of the day's ceremonies, Do arrived and told me with a smile that everything was taken of. Mr. Tran must have waited only long enough for our bus to be out of sight when he called his driver and went to find Do. Except they didn't know which Do they were looking for; was it Do with a rising tone, falling tone, no tone? When they were sure they knew the right person, Tran went to Do's house.

Now socially, a teacher of English and the Vice-Chair of the province are worlds apart. But Tran went to Do's house, threw open the door, and shouted, "Where is Do, where is Do, what are we going to do?" Do was sitting in his shorts finally eating a late supper. He explained to Tran the problems that we had been having with the Vice-Chair in implementing every step of the My Lai Peace Park. He told Tran about the many faxes I had sent informing Mr. Le of the ceremonies that we wished to hold. Tran and Do then went to Le's home and words were said. That night two mango saplings were located about 30 miles away and brought to the My Lai Peace Park on the back of a motorcycle. A banner was also made that night and erected at the peace park.

So after the somber ceremonies were completed at the My Lai Memorial, we all walked about a mile to the future site of the My Lai Peace Park. There we found that by coincidence the Communist Youth Party was having its three-day festival in a soccer field next to the peace park site. There were many brightly colored tents with flags waving and...a sound system. Do had previously made arrangements to use this sound system so Tran, Le and I made our speeches about the My Lai Peace Park and the hope that this park represented for peace, friendship, and better relations between our two countries. We then walked to where the two little mango saplings had been planted and watered them. This was a symbolic act because the saplings were removed the next day. It would be another two years of paperwork, land leveling, etc. before the first trees were planted.

Film crews surrounded us during the speeches and the tree planting ceremony and as far as they were concerned the tents and flags and gaiety were all part of the My Lai Peace Park ceremony. They got their photo-ops and we got a reprieve.

On the surface this seems irresponsible, unprofessional, or even unconscionable. In reality, it is none of these. This incident reflects the true nature of the problems of working in Viet Nam. (See Phan Van Do's article on page 3 for more insight into the nature of Viet Nam's bureaucracy.) Many organizations, businesses as well as NGOs, give up working in Viet Nam because of these problems.

But the answer is the same answer that has held true throughout human history when people from two countries come together. That answer is patience, perseverance, humility, and the desire to listen and learn from each other. This is the only way we will begin to understand the profound differences that exist between our two countries and come closer to solutions that allow us to overcome these differences so that we can at last bring our two countries together in peace.

## Mike Wallace's Thoughts on the Madison Quakers Projects in My Lai



Photo by William Wormsley

Mike Wallace of 60 Minutes interviews Mike Boehm at the My Lai Memorial, March 16, 1998.

For three days prior to March 16, 1998, I traveled with Mike Wallace and the 60 Minutes crew in Quang Ngai Province, Viet Nam. As we traveled and talked, Mike learned more about the Madison Quakers Projects in My Lai. Below is what he had to say about them in a short interview with veteran Bill Wormsley.

"We did a piece about some Bangladeshi people - I don't know if you saw it - about the loan fund there. And I don't know how well it worked, but I thought it was an inspiring thing to do, for we talk about capitalism all the time, and we talk self-sufficiency around the world. And then we don't do enough to help to start, to prime the pump. And so what they did there - and I don't know whether this is in any sense patterned after what they did there - but they gave small loans to people, a lot of them women, who wanted to open quite small businesses. And my understanding - I didn't do the piece - my understanding is that they paid back the loans and they're making a profit.

So, beyond the wonderful notion of the opening of the peace park for the young people of this area, the Quang Ngai area, to come, and young people to be together, or older people just to come out to a peaceful spot and take a look at the sky and trees and so forth, which is a wonderful, wonderful notion, it seems to me, of restoring and life-giving. Beyond that the notion of establishing that loan fund, it's the best darn thing anyone could possibly do, because when you see how hard these people work - I mean here it is, what?, ten minutes after seven in the morning, and everybody's on their bicycles and they're going into the fields and they're working like the dickens, and the kids are in school already - and you see how devoted they are to having new families. So many of the people we're seeing knew nothing whatsoever, know nothing of My Lai, and these youngsters seem to be such a happy crowd, and the fact that on the thirtieth anniversary of the heroism of Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn, that all of this could come together, it really is an inspiration."

# Building the My Lai Peace Park: The Problem Of Bureaucracy

By Phan Van Do

In 1996, after learning of the idea of the Vietnamese-American Peace Park in Bac Giang Province, the Son Tinh District People's Committee, Quang Ngai Province, sent a suggestion of initial cost to Mike Boehm, Project Director for Madison Quakers, Inc. for the project of the My Lai Peace Park. Mike sent them the money they required which was \$4,500. The Son Tinh Management Board of Investment then carried out the documentation for approval by the offices in the district itself and from the provincial authorities. Finally, the Management Board asked an architect from Quang Ngai City to design the peace park.

By March 1998 the design still wasn't finished. When we urged the Management Board, Mr. Le, Vice-Chair of the Son Tinh District People's Committee replied that they needed more money to start the construction and asked Mike for assistance. Shortly thereafter, as a gesture of good faith, Mike delivered \$11,000 to the Son Tinh District People's Committee at the District hall with the hope that the peace park would be built soon. Both these sums of money stayed in the state bank of Son Tinh District until 2001 after paying for the compensation for the site preparation and for the gazebo and some other costs.

It took nearly six years from the start to the opening of the peace park. Perhaps the same thing would happen in the future. This problem is quite common in Viet Nam, and in some cases, it takes even longer. This problem doesn't happen only to foreign projects: it also happens to Vietnamese projects. The main problem is the administrative bureaucracy system.

First, the staff in the bureaucracy are civil servants who work for their starving salary which can provide them just enough for a meager breakfast. So it's very sensitive to ask them to devote their all for their office work. Whether they care for the work or not, they still get the same salary. They get no bonus, no commission, no compliment, and no promotion if they do good work. But if they do something wrong against the regulations, they can be charged or punished. So do you think they, all the members from the leaders to the staff, will have a heart for the job? In fact, they really did the job assigned to them. They started the documentation. They did ask the architect to prepare the design, but they just left the work for him to take care of without confirming the deadline or talking about the pay in detail. And then the architect put the request in a drawer of his desk because he had so many other things to do. We did urge the Son Tinh Management Board of Investment to urge the designer, but the reply was always "wait".

Second, the way a document is transmitted also takes a lot of

time. It just goes around a circle. The Management Board has no power to give any decision at all. At first they have to get the approval or direction from the local party body to carry out the project, any project. It takes some time to arrange such a meeting. They then discuss the budget source to guarantee the implementation. They discuss the responsibility: who will be responsible if there are no funds to pay for the construction in case the foreign investment is cut off. Then, after the agreement, the decision is passed over to the district council. During this meeting they discuss and draw up a plan to carry it out. Then this plan is again passed to the party body for approval of the general project. After approval,

the Management Board starts their documentation. For example, if this part of the project of construction involves electricity, then they have to contact the Electricity Board for approval, and they have to go to many doors like that. And if they have any difficulty during the process of documentation, they then have to consult the upper level for direction. They can never give any decision. The same document, therefore, can go around different offices like a circle making the staff tired. So they sometimes just leave documents on the desk for months without concern. Who can blame them?

Third, the investment from NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) is usually not stable enough to create credibility to attract the contractors. If it is a state project from the state budget, the contractor is assured he will be paid off sooner or later. But if it is from an

NGO, there is no legal foundation to assure the payment after the construction is finished, and no laws to enable them to sue the NGOs in case the NGO does not fulfill its responsibilities to pay the costs of the project. In fact, the memorandum that both sides sign in advance is just a document of mutual trust more than law. So the contractor must have great trust for the foreign side when he decides to start the construction. This process is constantly a measurement of trust and honor between three sides before things start: the foreign side doesn't trust the local mediate management, the contractor doesn't trust the foreign side. They all usually rely on the responsibility of the facilitator who tries to create this mutual trust and relationship.

Because of these procedures, the construction of the My Lai Peace Park as well as other projects took quite a long time to start. But now after several talks about how to avoid such problems, Quang Ngai Province has given the Madison Quakers the right to choose the designer, the contractor and builders, and the supervisors to start a project. The problem now is finding funding to continue building the peace park.

Na Noi, Viet Nam, September 20, 2002



# My Lai Primary School Update

These photos were taken at the eight room primary school, dedicated in 2001. Two more eight room primary school buildings will be constructed to fulfill the existing need for class room space. Each of the remaining two buildings will cost \$50,000. So far we have only raised half of the funds needed for the second eight room school building. When we have raised the final \$25,000 construction can begin.

In the meantime, the process of turning over responsibility for construction of these schools to the Madison Friends has begun. This is an exciting change because it means that, working with our project coordinator Phan Van Do and the local People's Committee, we can hire villagers from My Lai to work on the school. This will help the villagers economically, as well as give them a personal investment in the project.

Photo by M.



The My Lai Primary School today. Many new trees and shrubs have been planted by the villagers of My Lai.

Photo by M. Boehm



The bathroom cleaning crew. The girls clean the girls side and the boys clean the boys side. But the girls say that the boys sometimes need help. This is the most modern bathroom in the whole village.

Photo by M. Boehm



Typical classroom at the My Lai primary school.

# My Lai Peace Park Update

After the dedication of the My Lai Peace Park on March 16, 2001, a fence needed to be built quickly to prevent the erosion of the ponds and borders of the peace park by rain and cattle. Unfortunately, the paperwork needed for the fence took a very long time, and the fence was only completed in June of this year. The next steps for the park include facing the ponds with stone and mortar, bringing in low voltage electricity, and bringing enough fertile soil from nearby mountains to cover the entire park with at least six inches of soil. As with the primary school the process of transferring authority for construction of the My Lai Peace Park to the Madison Friends has been started. Once the paperwork is complete, we will be able to hire local villagers to do this work.



Photo by M. Boehm

Erosion of My Lai Peace Park. The just completed fence and berm has solved the problem.



Photo by M. Boehm

Vietnamese workers making fence posts.



Photo by M. Boehm

Finished posts waiting to be installed.

## A Veteran's Gift

In our last funding appeal we noted the success of the various loan funds that the Madison Friends have funded; more than 1,500 women have received loans through funds set up in nine villages with repayment rates averaging 98%. As a result of this success, we wanted to expand this program. So we asked if congregations, communities, or organizations would be willing to take on the funding of one complete village.

We received a response immediately from veteran John Morris. John said he would like to fund a village personally and sent a check for \$6,500. In his words, "The opportunity to help, even if only for a few less fortunate than myself, helps to fill a void in my life and adds meaning as well." The timing of John's contribution could not have been better. We had received an appeal earlier this year from the Binh Son District People's Committee of Quang Ngai Province to help an exceptionally poor village. This village is named Binh An village.

Binh An. Over the years I have seen a lot of poverty in Viet



Photo by M.

Example of the extreme poverty that exists in Binh An village.

Nam. And each year I think I have seen the worst conditions I could possibly see. But visiting Binh An village was a wrenching experience...bundled weeds for walls and roofs, tattered plastic as decoration, high levels of malnutrition in the children resulting in brain damage for some. Schooling is out of the question. These conditions exist in most rural villages in Viet Nam, but usually only for 10% to 20% of the village. In Binh An 60% of the villagers suffer from this extreme poverty. I have never seen so much concentrated poverty before as exists in Binh An.

Of course, it will take years to reverse this level of poverty but John's contribution will have an incredible impact in beginning this reversal.



Photo by M. Boehm

Phan Van Do peers into the "home" of an elderly woman living in Binh An village. She was gone the day we visited because, as the neighbors told us, she must climb into the mountains every day to harvest snails. If she harvests 2 kilograms of snails she has enough to buy a little rice.

## John Morris' Story



John Morris aboard the Kitty Hawk, 1969.

I was in the Navy from March 28, 1968 to December 10, 1971. I was first stationed (out of boot camp) on the U.S.S. Kitty Hawk, from July 1968 to May 1970. I began my tour on the Kitty Hawk as a "fireman apprentice", working in the auxiliary machinery and boiler rooms, but eventually got out of that rate and became a cook, which wasn't easy since machinist mates and boiler tenders were just about the most undermanned jobs in the Navy. The Kitty Hawk went on an 8 month "West Pac" cruise in January of 1969, spending approximately 3 to 5 weeks at "Yankee Station", Tonkin Gulf, in between port visits to places like Subic Bay, P. I. and Hong Kong.

I managed to get orders to "commissary man (cook) school" and left the Kitty Hawk for 4 weeks leave on May 4, 1970. I still remember driving home on I-5, having left the "Shitty Kitty" high and dry in the Bremerton, WA, Naval Shipyard. I had the radio on and news of the students killed at Kent State, Ohio, was announced. I remember arriving home in Oregon, walking through the front door of my childhood home and instead of "Hello" or "How are you?" I blurted out, "What the hell is going on in this damn country?" My mom said nothing.

On to San Diego after my leave, I spent 8 weeks learning how to correctly measure this, that, and the other ingredient. I then got orders to another aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Ranger, and went on another 8 month "West Pac" cruise, beginning at the end of October 1970. Upon getting out of the Navy in December 1971, I worked for about 18 months in a circuit breaker panel board manufacturing plant in Portland, Oregon. Quitting that in August of 1973, I began living on my G.I. education benefits by attending a community college in my hometown.

In December of 1976 I went back into the Navy and wound up serving another 8 years before finally throwing in the towel for good in July of 1985. For the last 17 years I've been working and living in Oak Harbor, WA.

Because I was not "in country" and did not experience combat per se, I haven't given a great deal of thought to my role in the "American War." But, having long ago come to the conclusion that the war was a big mistake, I nevertheless began, grudgingly and gradually, to educate myself about Viet Nam and the war.

Then, around the summer of 1998, I heard an interview on the radio between Mike Boehm and Matthew Rothschild (editor of the Progressive Magazine). Mike's story inspired me enough to want to help. So toward the end of 1998, I began contributing modestly. Recently, I was blessed with the ability to help in a larger way, monetarily. With the Winds of Peace publication to educate and inspire with the editorials, stories, letters and poems, I decided I wanted to share my personal blessing.

To be candid, I've lived a modest and frugal adult life. I saw stark

**John Morris Story continued**

poverty in many of the “ports of call” during my 12 years of naval service and have never forgotten it. The opportunity to help, even if only for a few less fortunate than myself, helps to fill a void in my life and adds meaning as well. I am grateful to Madison Quakers and Mike for presenting me with the unique opportunity of giving.

Your work and my “research” have caused me, recently, to reflect on a few things. I’ve tried to imagine how I would feel, think and react if my homeland were invaded, my country men, women and even...no, especially... children were conscripted, brain washed, and set against one another to fight and kill. And then, years later, the invaders return, with wants and needs for forgiveness. I would have a difficult time with that, I think. So, the willingness of the Vietnamese people to allow a “process of healing” to take place is truly a blessing for many and is a demonstration of true spiritual advancement. It is a demonstration by a people of a country I look forward to knowing more about.

Sincerely,

John A. Morris



John Morris today.

## Letters

Dear Mike,

This contribution (for the My Lai Primary School) is a gift for the birthday of Abigail VandeBerg.

Heidi Baruch

Hi,

I heard Mike Boehm talk about the My Lai project at the Vets for Peace conference. Enclosed is \$8.00 for a copy of the video on the trip to My Lai (The Sound of the Violin in My Lai). I am a Vietnam vet and appreciate the work you are doing in reaching out across borders to a people we owe a lot to. It was in Vietnam that I woke up to and confronted my racism and the real reasons for U.S. involvement. The humanity of the Vietnamese people was not even a consideration by the U.S.

Thank you for your work.

Joe Urgo

## Letters

**In keeping with this newsletter’s purpose to educate and promote discussion, we will print not only letters which support our work, but also letters critical of this work. We request that all letters be signed by the writer.**

Dear Mike,

I enjoyed reading the January (2000) issue of Winds of Peace which was mailed to VVA Chapter 324 in Milwaukee. I strongly support all efforts which enhance the lives of those suffering from the effects of the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, the My Lai Peace Park holds high potential as a place of understanding and healing.

America’s part in the wrongness of the War can be seen as an outcome of broad policies and individual actions. Examples of this were presented in the newsletter in terms of civilian casualties. The devastation from the bombing of North Vietnamese was seen in the words of To Huu. A little later we were reminded of the massacre at My Lai. The focus on these sad consequences seems to ignore the decades of atrocities committed by Vietnamese Communists against civilian populations.

Over many years following World War II, Communists in the Viet Minh killed hundreds of rival group nationalists whose common cause was the ouster of French rule. In the 50’s and 60’s countless civilians living in rural hamlets and villages were brutalized or killed at the hands of the Communists. At times, usually during Tet, acts of terrorism were committed against city populations. And when South Vietnam fell in 1975, brutal reprisals were carried out in South Vietnam and in Laos against the Hmong.

During 1969, I served with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. In September, our infantry company was operating in an area west of Hue. On a day that will always stand out in my memory, we found ourselves walking on human bones as we moved up a creek to a higher elevation. In this eerie setting, we came upon the remains of 150 civilians who were taken here and massacred by the Viet Cong. We would stay at this location for several days while Vietnamese government officials came to identify victims from personal items that were scattered about.

The truth about the Vietnam War is that atrocities were committed by both sides. I would like to think that future issues of Winds of Peace might better reflect this point when the wrongful actions of Americans are referred to.

Best of luck in the heartfelt work that you are doing in Vietnam.

Joe Herbert



Photo by M. Boehm

# Lessons Learned

by Mike Boehm



Attendees at the National Veterans for Peace Conference, 2002.

Much has been said about soldiers and their participation in war. Most soldiers are changed forever by their experiences in war. Some can no longer cope with society. Others, though, become committed to promoting peace and justice for the rest of their lives.

I was reminded of this when I attended the National Veterans For Peace Conference in Duluth, Minnesota, in August 2002. At least 100 veterans and their families gathered at St. Scholastica College to share ideas and perspectives of war and peace. Among the presenters was Diane Carlson Evans, who lead the movement to create a memorial for women veterans in Washington, D.C. Jack Palmeyer-Nelson spoke about the history of the School of the Americas and the pressing need to shut it down.

The Vietnam Veterans Against the War have actively promoted peace and social justice issues around the world for more than 35 years. Other veterans' organizations working on peace and social justice programs include Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, which won the Nobel Peace Prize award in the late 90s for its role in the campaign to ban land mines. On a smaller scale, veteran Chuck Theusch has founded the Vietnam Library Project, which has funded the building of a series of libraries in Viet Nam.

The following pages represent some of the projects veterans have initiated or are supporting.



This flag represents what many veterans feel is the complete takeover of our government by corporate interests.

## Vietnam Veterans Against the War Statement of Purpose

Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam vets marched together in a peace demonstration. It was organized to voice the growing opposition among returning servicemen and women to the still-raging war in Indochina and grew rapidly to a membership of over 30,000 throughout the United States, as well as active duty GIs stationed in Vietnam. Through ongoing actions and grassroots organization, VVAW exposed the ugly truth about US involvement in Southeast Asia and our first-hand experiences helped many other Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW quickly took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we started the first rap groups to deal with traumatic after-effects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at Vet Centers now. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA Hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover-up these conditions, as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange Victims.

Today our government is still financing and arming undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world. Recently, American troops have been sent into combat in the Middle East and Central America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans are still denied justice— facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are being cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent another generation from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. JOIN US!



## Charles Liteky at the Veterans For Peace Conference, 2002

Charles Liteky served in Viet Nam from 1966-1971 as a chaplain. During a search and destroy mission, the unit he was with came under heavy fire from a battalion-sized North Vietnamese Army unit. Liteky, under intense fire, administered last rites, directed medivac helicopters in to carry out the wounded, and personally carried more than 20 wounded men to the landing zones. All this while being wounded himself. For these actions he received the Medal of Honor in 1968.

A supporter of the war at the time, Liteky received his personal wake-up call ten years after the end of the war in Viet Nam, while he and ten other Viet Nam vets traveled to El Salvador in 1985 on a fact-finding mission. These vets met with women who carried with them the photos of mutilated male bodies given to them by the El Salvadoran military as visual aids to help them identify their mysteriously missing sons and husbands.

Liteky said, "Those horror stories told by simple peasant women (stories implicating my government and my fellow citizens) finally crashed through the emotional defenses I had built around my psyche. I could no longer protect myself by denying the harsh realities of war. Suppressed memories of Vietnam came rolling back like angry waves and finally reached the guarded shores of my consciousness. As I began to wake up, I prayed for the courage to face this hard fact: that I had been a moral supporter of an immoral war in Vietnam."

In 1986, he returned his Congressional Medal of Honor to the U.S. government. He left it at the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, DC with the following note for President Reagan. "In 1968, I was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving lives. In 1986, my conscience called me to return it to help save other lives, those of Latin Americans." He has served two terms in federal prisons for nonviolent protests of US policy, particularly the existence of the School of the Americas.

While attending the Veterans For Peace conference this year, he called for organizing a peace delegation to Palestine by veterans from our country. Veterans would once again act as witnesses and support for an end to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. This suggestion was met with enthusiasm and a number of organizational meetings were convened.

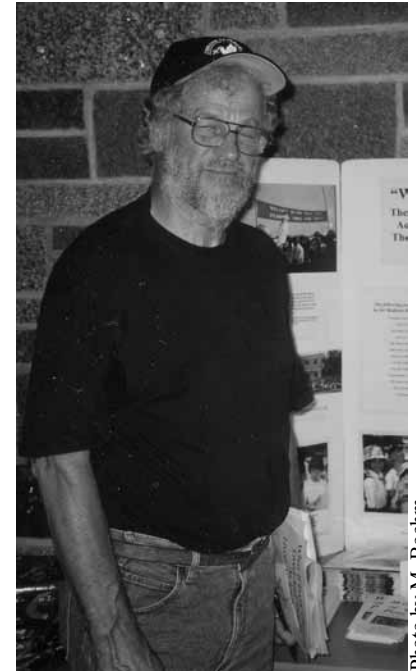


Photo by M. Boehm

Charles Liteky at the Veterans for Peace Conference.

## I Won't Let Them Take My Flag

By Charles R. Powell

I first saw that flag in school where I learned about its stripes and stars and colors. I will forever associate that banner with song. Not just "The Star Spangled Banner" but "America The Beautiful," "God Bless America," and "My Country Tis Of Thee."

It seems the flag was most often linked with war and violence: bombs bursting in air; leading the charge up some hill; its image painted on the nose cones of warplanes, missiles and bombs; its likeness decaled on the sides of warships and tanks; it being hoisted over conquered territory.

But that isn't what attracted me. I was captivated by the things for which it was supposed to stand: "one nation, with liberty and justice for all."

Now, the generals and politicians are again waving my flag as they clamor for war, death, destruction, bombing, burning and maiming. And sadly, like gutless, heartless, mindless sheep, too many fellow citizens are climbing on that bandwagon.

But, to me "old glory" still stands for the liberty, justice and solidarity yet to come. So, I still wave it too. I wave it for health care, education, housing and food for all. I wave it for peace and love, and I wave it for hope. Most of all, I wave it for the America yet to be.

(Footnote: the original rough version was penned July 30, 2002, en route from Chicago to Albuquerque, NM aboard Amtrak train number 3, the Southwest Chief. It was first read in Duluth, MN, on August 17, 2002 during the "Issues Forum" of the annual national convention of Veterans For Peace, whose theme was "What is Real Patriotism?")



Photo by M. Boehm

Charles Powell reading "I won't let them take my flag from me."

**Veterans from World War Two, the Korean War, the Vietnam war, and the war in the Gulf have initiated a wide range of activities which promote peace today. Below are just some of these projects.**

**Maine VFP Bookcover Project**

Maine Chapter of Veterans For Peace distributes bookcovers with non-violence themes to school children.  
Tom Sturtevant, President  
Maine Veterans For Peace  
Ph. 207-377-2370  
E-mail-tomstur@prexar.com

**Violence Prevention Education**

Sponsored by Minnesota Veterans For Peace Chapter #27  
www.cramnaraine.org

**Veterans For a Hydrogen Economy**

Converting the world away from an oil economy to a hydrogen economy  
www.vheusa.org

**Witness For Peace**

Dedicated to ending the cycle of military and economic violence.  
John Pegg  
1015 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Duluth, MN 55805  
V-mail-218-349-1786  
wfpumw@witnessforpeace.org

**An Important Lesson**

**By George Mizo**

(Decorated Viet Nam veteran and founder of Viet Nam Friendship Village—1945-2002)

**You, my parents, taught me that it was wrong to kill . . . except in war.  
You, my church, taught me that it was wrong to kill . . . except in war.  
You, my teachers, taught me that it was wrong to kill . . . except in war.  
You, my government, taught me that it was wrong to kill . . . except in war.**

**Then you sent me to war  
And when I had no choice . . . except to kill,  
Then you told me I was wrong!  
And now I will tell you . . . my parents.  
. . . my church.  
. . . my teachers.  
. . . my government.  
It is not wrong to kill . . . except in war.  
It is wrong to kill period!  
And this you have to learn . . .  
Just as I had to!**

**Korea Truth Commission**

Formed after the revelation of the No Gun Ri massacre  
39 W. 14<sup>th</sup> St., #206  
New York, NY 10011  
www.koreatruthcommison.org

**World Citizen, Inc.**

“To involve as many people as we can, starting with children, in activities that promote a peaceful, healthy, non-violent world.”  
2145 Ford Parkway, Suite 300  
St. Paul, MN 55116  
Ph.-651-695-2587  
E-mail-ellin017@tc.umn.edu  
www.peacesites.org

**Veterans Support Vieques**

End the U.S. bombing of the tiny inhabited island of Vieques, Puerto Rico  
P.O. Box 7053  
Jersey City, NJ 07307  
Ph. 201-876-0430  
E-mail-vetsconvieques@aol.com

**The Korea Peace Campaign**

U.S. troops out of Korea  
Veterans for Peace  
c/o World Community Center  
438 North Skinker  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
www.veteransforpeace.org

**Every Church a Peace Church**

What if every church lived and taught as Jesus lived and taught?  
Ph.-717-859-1958  
E-mail-jstoner@ecapc.org

# Peace Poetry

**Poetry by the children and adults of the North Shore of Massachusetts, sponsored by Veterans For Peace, Samantha Smith Chapter #45**

(Samantha Smith, a ten year old girl from Maine, wrote a letter to the political leader of the former Soviet Union, asking, "Why do you want to make war on us?" She accepted an invitation from the Soviet Premier to visit the USSR, becoming our youngest citizen ambassador of good will. Shortly after her return to the U.S., Samantha was killed in a plane crash.)

## Peace Begins in Me

I love to think forward to the day,  
When there will be world peace,  
But for now I'll concentrate,  
On what's inside of me.

For war begins with ignorance,  
With hate or sometimes greed,  
So now I look deep inside,  
to make sure there's none in me.

There are six billion people on this earth,  
And I am only me.  
But the road to peace has just begun,  
So I'll just start with me.

For the greatest war you'll ever fight,  
Is the one with your own mind,  
If we could all just win our own,  
Who knows just what we'd find.

If we could all just look inside our hearts,  
Everyone, from sea to sea,  
Then I think that we would find,  
That peace begins with me.

Stacey Manter - Grade 9  
Triton Regional High, Byfield, Massachusetts



Photo by Mike Boehm

Girls from My Lai on their way to the primary school built by Madison Friends. Although they were late for class they were having too much fun to leave.

## Peace

"Peace is sometimes giving  
someone what they want."

By Easton Ehleh  
Kindergarten, Essex  
Elementary and Middle  
School

## Comprende

We all hear your cries,  
Muffled voices carried by the wind.  
An escape from tyranny,  
An escape from fear is all you wish.  
We see your pain; we hear you.  
Nosotros comprendemos.  
Vir verstehen.  
Noi capiano.  
Nous comprenons.  
We understand.  
No matter what language,  
We understand.  
Do you?

By Andrew McKay  
Grade 11, Gloucester High School

## Peace

Today I was riding my bike.  
Then I gave a balloon to someone.

Then I gave a balloon to five hundred people.  
Then I made peace.

By Christopher Dente  
Kindergarten,  
Essex Elementary and Middle School

Excerpts from Peace Poetry books - 2001, 2002  
Poems reprinted with permission  
For more info contact Tom Gale at;  
Veterans For Peace, Samantha Smith Chapter #45  
P.O. Box 177, Ipswich, MA 01938  
978-356-7671

# Tran Van Thuy Visits Madison, Wisconsin

## Films Shown in Madison

### How to Behave – The Story of Kindness

Prompted by a dying friend who urges him to lead a life of kindness and by a bricklayer who asks why films do not show the lives of ordinary people instead of fictions, the filmmaker goes on an odyssey looking for kindness or charity in Vietnam where the rich and powerful are few and those in poverty and suffering are many.

Director-Tran Van Thuy-Silver Dove Prize at Leipzig International Film Festival 1988. Rights bought by 10 international television networks.

### A Story from the Corner of the Park

A meditation on the grace with which a family whose two children suffer from the affects of Agent Orange live their lives.

Director-Tran Van Thuy

### Return to Ngu Thuy

One of Vietnam's most well known documentary filmmakers, Le Manh Thich, returns to a village where he had filmed the heroism of Vietnamese women during the American war. He finds them, 30 years later, forgotten and impoverished. This film has been called an eloquent plea for peace.

Director-Le Manh Thich-Best Short Film Award at Asia Pacific Film Festival 1998.

### Where War has Passed

An emotionally wrenching film of families in Vietnam whose children were born with horrible defects as a result of their parents being sprayed with Agent Orange. One reviewer says, "WARNING! If you watch this film you may never be able to support another war again."

Director-Vu Le My-Won awards in Germany and Japan.

### The Sound of the Violin in My Lai

Produced in commemoration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre at My Lai, this film documents the story of the massacre at My Lai by American soldiers and the rescue of some of the villagers from My Lai by a helicopter crew. The film ends with a message of hope from the help given to the poor people of My Lai by the Madison Quakers and the offering of music to the spirits of the dead by veteran Mike Boehm. This film is now being used as part of the curriculum for all fifth grade students in Vietnam under the heading of peace studies.

Director-Tran Van Thuy-Silver Lotus Award, Best Short Film Award Asia Pacific Film Festival 1999.

Tran Van Thuy, one Viet Nam's renowned documentary filmmakers, has won awards internationally for his films for more than 30 years. For this reason his visit to Madison in early October 2002 was a historic occasion. This event, co-sponsored by Madison Quakers, Inc. and The Center for Southeast Asian Studies featured five films brought to the U.S. by Tran Van Thuy: *The Sound of the Violin in My Lai*, *Story of Kindness*, *Story From the Corner of the Park*, *Return To Ngu Thuy* and *Where War Has Passed*.

Throughout the war years and after the war, we as a nation (through ignorance and propaganda) have continued to deny the Vietnamese people their humanity. Mr. Thuy's films give us, at long last, a chance to learn about the people of Viet Nam and how they have coped with the aftermath of war.

During the many question and answer sessions we had with Mr. Thuy we learned just how difficult it was for him to maintain his integrity while making his films. It became obvious that it took incredible courage for him to refuse to compromise in an era of strict government control of the media. He told us how lonely it was for him when fellow filmmakers backed away so as not to be tainted by him. He came close to being jailed many times, and the government banned some of his films. His own family questioned why he was so determined to make his films according to the truth as he saw it. (And before we judge the Vietnamese government, we need to remember that censorship is not restricted to communist regimes. Witness the McCarthy era, when artists were black listed, books were burned, and people were jailed for their presumed political affiliations. Even now libraries are encouraged to censor what people read as result of the Patriot Act.)

Time has vindicated Tran Van Thuy. He has emerged as one of the very few filmmakers trusted by the people of Viet Nam. Looking at the audience watching his films last week, one could see young Vietnamese students, older Vietnamese couples who had fled Viet Nam, anti-war activists, and veterans. As veteran Glenn Clark put it "It was great to see all these different groups of people here together in search of our common humanity."

And it was Tran Van Thuy, through his courage, perseverance and suffering, who brought us all together.



Tran Van Thuy wins the award given for Best Short Film at the Asia Pacific Film Festival, 1999.

## Viewers Respond to Thuy's Films

"I was deeply moved by the three films I saw that Tran Van Thuy had produced. Because of his integrity as a filmmaker, each one of his films conveyed a powerful message about human suffering and the capacity of humans to rise above their suffering through compassion and sharing."

Joe Elder-Professor of Sociology, Language and Culture of Asia and Quaker anti-war activist, one who brought medical supplies to Ha Noi in 1969.

"Tran Van Thuy's films present a picture of candor which we still believe does not exist in Vietnam. We have a 60s view of Vietnam as a closed society. Viewing his films shows that there is an active, vital journalistic culture today in Vietnam."

Chuck Theusch-Vietnam veteran-Founder of the Vietnam Library Project.

"The presence of Tran Van Thuy and his powerful films moved me deeply. For much of my life, since serving as a combat photographer with the U.S. army in Vietnam, I have struggled to express, through art, the tragic reality of war. By focusing his camera on people, Tran Van Thuy communicates a universe of struggle and strength. His work is filled with sadness but also with patience, love, kindness and humor....just like the people he describes."

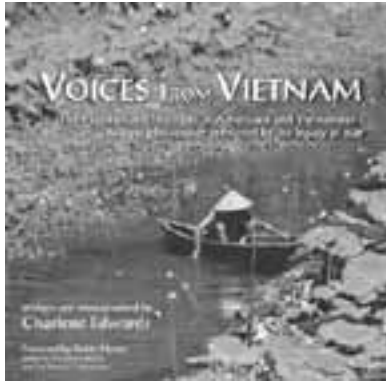
David Giffey-Vietnam veteran, artist and peace activist.

## Book Reviews

### Voices From Vietnam

By Charlene Edwards

Book review by Lana Noone



Voices From Vietnam, a beautifully photographed and passionately written book, tugs at your heart strings while creating a deeper understanding of this war and its aftermath.

Through powerful personal narratives and photographs, Voices From Vietnam revisits the emotions and experiences that have defined the lives of the men, women and children affected by this war, American and Vietnamese, on the battlefield and at home. It exposes the suffering of soldiers and nurses, the struggles of the Amerasians, the challenges of those Americans who chose Canada over Vietnam and the hardships of the "boat people." It relays how these extraordinarily brave men and women have sought to overcome the horrors of this experience and how it has transformed their lives.

Voices From Vietnam allows you to experience the personal

reflections of yesterday's war with today's perspective in the words of General Westmoreland, Kim Phuc, Cardinal O'Connor, Ambassador Le Van Bang, David Dellinger and many others in this unique, 264 page, beautifully designed 10x10 coffee-table book. Voices From Vietnam not only includes 70 inspiring stories and over 170 captivating photographs taken during the war and some thirty years later, a chronology, map, and index, but also an extensive resource guide of agencies providing support services to those American veterans, Vietnamese and Amerasians needing assistance in healing the wounds of war.

Charlene Edwards wanted to include all the people whose lives were forever impacted by Vietnam. She succeeded at this monumental task. I highly recommend this outstanding book...truly a work of passion, love and faith.

Voices From Vietnam is available both in hardcover \$40 (ISBN: 0971402051) and soft cover \$25 (ISBN: 0971402035) through bookstores, or for an autographed copy write to Journeys at PO Box 610260, Bayside, NY 11361.

For further information e-mail [vnvoices@aol.com](mailto:vnvoices@aol.com)

### The Compassionate Rebel:

#### Energized by Anger, Motivated by Love

Stories collected and written by Burt Berlowe, Rebecca Janke, and Julie Pershorn

Published by Growing Communities for Peace

The Compassionate Rebel is a collection of stories about extraordinary men and women in our community who maintain a powerful balance in their lives between anger and love. These ordinary-looking heroes have tapped into their anger at injustice and used it to spur action, and they have refined and channeled that anger with love, patience, and continuous respect for humanity.

This book presents the insightful discovery that those qualities previously thought to be in conflict with each other, namely anger and love, may quite possibly be the formula for a powerful force in the quest for peace and justice in the world.

Each story in the Compassionate Rebel is accompanied by an artistic photography, questions for contemplation, and a list of resources for reflection and action. It is anything from an inspirational coffee-table book to a thought-provoking textbook for college students. Any reader will find it empowering and full of hope.



To order this book or to inquire about other peace books, contact: Growing communities for Peace, P.O. Box 248, Scandia, MN 55073, Phone: (651) 257-2478, Fax: (651) 257-2095, Email: [peace@peacemaker.org](mailto:peace@peacemaker.org), Web site: [www.peacemaker.org](http://www.peacemaker.org)

# School of the Americas

## Rising Up: November 2001

I have participated in demonstrations to close the School of the Americas for the last five years. This year I will be back to Ft. Benning from Nov. 15-17 to participate in the ongoing effort to shut this school down. Please join us!

Below is the report of last year's demonstration, written by the School of the Americas Watch and published on their web site ([www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)). —Mike Boehm

Over 10,000 people traveled to Columbus, Georgia, on November 17 & 18, 2001, to speak out against the terror training that takes place at the SOA. Despite new challenges in 2001, the integrity of the movement was preserved by its grounding in the nonviolent tradition of Romero, the four churchwomen, and countless others who have gone before.

In the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan, the city government of Columbus sought a court injunction barring four individuals identified as “leaders” of the movement from calling for or participating in the traditional solemn funeral procession or any presence at all within 50 yards of Ft. Benning. We went to court rather than sign any agreement that compromised the integrity of the movement we represented. On the anniversary of the Jesuit massacre, we sat before the same judge who several months earlier had sentenced the SOA 26 to prison, fully expecting the same treatment. Surprising everyone, Judge Faircloth cited our eleven years of peaceful protest as he ruled that the area in front of the main entrance to Ft. Benning is our traditional and constitutionally protected area for freedom of expression.

Prior to the vigil, Ft. Benning officials erected a fence at the base's main entrance to stop the funeral procession from entering. This fence was transformed into a memorial to the victims of SOA violence as participants in the largest funeral procession ever covered it with crosses, flowers, banners, and pictures of those whose voices have been taken away.

Eighty-six people were arrested for trespassing onto the base; many went around the fence attempting to deliver coffins, crosses, and indictments to the SOA itself. Thirty-one others were arrested late Sunday evening after constructing a “global village” in front of the locked gates, representing a world free from terror, where all live with peace and dignity. Through the use of solidarity tactics, the 31 successfully negotiated their release with time served, after spending two days in jail. In total, 117 people were arrested for their nonviolent witness to close the SOA on Sunday.

SOA Watch maintained a fully staffed media office for the duration of the event, resulting in coverage by outlets including CNN, CBS, & ABC; feature stories included pieces in *The Nation*; coverage by the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*; international coverage in major syndicates from Germany to Turkey; as well as continuous online coverage by the Atlanta Independent Media Center. And in addition to the tremendous support from the ACLU of Georgia, we set up an on-site office for the Just Cause Law Collective, who not only assisted with preventing the injunction against us, but also provided tremendous support for those arrested on state charges.

But most important to our presence was the nonviolent tradition we have created together these past eleven years. This tradition allowed us to approach a military base on high alert status, remain firm in the truth we came there to express and maintain a peaceful, nonviolent presence despite the tensions. This tradition now leaves us poised to close the School of Assassins and change the destructive policies it represents.



Photo by Catherine Bush.

Demonstrators at the protest to shut down the School Of Americas at Ft. Benning, GA lay down a snow drift of crosses bearing the names of innocent civilians who were killed by military forces trained at the SOA.

# Mike Boehm Speaking Tour

## Features Slides of the Madison Quakers Projects in Viet Nam

Below are the venues and contact information for Mike's slide show on the Madison Quakers projects in Viet Nam.

October 27 Lancaster, PA  
Contact Lancaster Friends Meeting: 717-392-2762

October 31 Providence, RI  
Contact Dennis Tabella: 401-461-7940

November 3 Amherst, MA  
Contact Ann Levinger: 413-253-9370

November 4 Washington, DC-Film festival featuring The Sound of the Violin in My Lai  
Contact Search For Common Ground: 202-265-4300

November 5 Amherst, MA  
Contact Ann Levinger: 414-253-9370

November 6 Maine  
Contact Tom Schmidt: 207-529-5302

November 7 & 8 Marlboro, Brattleboro, VT  
Contact Seth Harter: 802-254-7024

November 9-14 To Be Announced

November 15-17 Ft. Benning, Georgia  
Demonstration to close the School of Americas

November 18 & 19 Black Mountain, NC  
Contact Anne Morrison Welch: 828-669-0832

November 20-22 Media, PA  
Contact Carol-Anne Riddle: 610-356-1777

November 23 Holmdel, NJ  
Conference on "Operation Babylift"  
Contact Lana Noone: 516-486-0318

November 25 Fremont, MI  
Contact Sharon Daly: 231-924-5349

Contact Mike by cell phone at 608-445-7349  
or by e-mail [vapp@mylaipeacepark.org](mailto:vapp@mylaipeacepark.org)

**Winds of Peace**

Newsletter for Madison Friends Projects in Viet Nam  
**Mike Boehm, Project Co-ordinator**  
**Phan Van Do, Project Co-ordinator in Viet Nam**  
**Terri Smith, Newsletter Design**

"The people of Viet Nam are looking forward to the winds of peace blowing from America."

Please send letters, questions, or written contributions to:  
**Winds of Peace/c/o Mike Boehm**  
 2312 E. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53704  
**Phone:** 608-244-9505  
**Fax:** 608-255-1800  
**e-mail:** [vapp@mylaipeacepark.org](mailto:vapp@mylaipeacepark.org)  
 Visit our web site on the Internet at:  
[www.mylaipeacepark.org](http://www.mylaipeacepark.org)

**I/we would like to support Madison Quakers Projects in Viet Nam! \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Optional-Please earmark my donation for:

<input type="checkbox"/> Loan funds	<input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic minority projects
<input type="checkbox"/> My Lai Peace Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese-American Peace Park
<input type="checkbox"/> My Lai Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Sisters Meeting Sisters

Make checks payable to:  
 Madison Friends Meeting  
 1704 Roberts Court  
 Madison WI 53711-2029

Please specify Projects in Viet Nam, or one of the options on your check. Donations are tax deductible.  
 Thank you for your generosity.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



# Greeting Cards

## featuring the artwork of the children of My Lai

These drawings were made by the children in My Lai as part of an art exchange with children in Madison, WI.

Sets of six different drawings, in full-color on 5 x 7 inch recycled stock, with envelopes: \$8.00  
Shipping and handling: \$1.50

Payment should be made by check to:

**Madison Friends Meeting**  
**1704 Roberts Ct.**  
**Madison WI 53711-2029**

Please write "My Lai Greeting Cards" in the memo part of your check.

To view all the cards, in color, visit [www.mylaipeacepark.org/greetingcards.htm](http://www.mylaipeacepark.org/greetingcards.htm)  
If you know of a retail outlet for these cards, please contact Mike Boehm 608-244-9505 ([vapp@mylaipeacepark.org](mailto:vapp@mylaipeacepark.org)).

**Madison Monthly Meeting**  
**Religious Society of Friends**  
**1704 Roberts Ct.**  
**Madison, WI 53711-2029**

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